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SUBJECT: NORTHERN UGANDA: LRA DEFECTOR AND NEGOTIATORS WELCOMED IN KAMPALA

1. (SBU) Summary: Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) Operations Chief Opio Makasi, who fled the group's camp on October 2, and the LRA's Juba Delegation arrived in Kampala on October 31 and November 1 respectively to warm welcomes and heavy press coverage. The Government continues to debrief Makasi about the rupture in the LRA's leadership. The LRA negotiators met with President Museveni on November 3, signed an extension to the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA), and will begin their consultations in northern Uganda on November 6 in Gulu. The two almost simultaneous arrivals present a dilemma for the Government's military and civilian camps: supporting the LRA delegation's consultations while at the same time wanting to exploit Makasi's defection to encourage others. End Summary.

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DEFECTOR RECEIVES HERO'S WELCOME
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2. (U) Opio Makasi, the LRA's chief of operations, fled the LRA's Garamba Park hideout on October 2 after Joseph Kony arrested deputy leader, Vincent Otti, along with some top officers and combatants. Uganda's Chief of Military Intelligence (CMI), Col. Leopold Kyanda, met the MONUC flight from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) carrying Makasi with full press coverage. On November 1, Makasi and his wife applied for and were granted amnesty by the Amnesty Commission after renouncing rebellion. CMI continues to debrief Makasi and the Government's New Vision newspaper carried an interview with him on November 4.

3. (SBU) Makasi detailed for the press the rupture between Kony and Otti and Otti's arrest. He said that Kony had invited Otti to a meeting at which he was arrested. Makasi feigned illness and did not go. He fled after being tipped off that he was to be arrested. Makasi said that there were only 834 people in the camp. Six hundred of them were fighters, according to Makasi. He stated that Kony intended on overthrowing the Ugandan Government and in Makasi's view, Kony would not surrender. Makasi did not know if Otti was dead or alive. Northern parliamentarian Reagan Okumu told us that he spoke with Otti approximately one week ago. Otti told Okumu that he did not have any airtime. A Southern Sudanese General accompanying the LRA delegation to Kampala said he reached a surprised Otti after Chissano's failed attempt to see the LRA leadership. The General said that he tried many numbers before Otti picked up and whispered that he could not talk at the time. Gulu District Chairman Mao speculates that Otti was probably alive, but stripped of his duties. Mao has yet to reach any one in Otti's camp.

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LRA DELEGATION ARRIVES AMID FANFARE
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14. (U) The LRA's negotiating team arrived in Kampala on November 1. The GOU's chief negotiators, Minister of Internal Affairs Ruhakana Rugunda and Minister of State for International Affairs Okello Oryem, joined LRA delegation leader Martin Ojul in a two-hour press conference at which Ojul released a dove, symbolizing peace. Ojul stated that the U.N. Security Council had the power to suspend the International Criminal Court (ICC) warrants. Another LRA member Ayena Odongo said that the ICC warrants were an encumbrance to the peace process. Separately, President Museveni repeated that Uganda would not support lifting the warrants without a peace deal. Ojul apologized to Museveni for the incident in October 2006 when delegation member Josephine Apire refused to shake his hand. She has been replaced on the LRA delegation by David Matsanga Norekesh.

15. (SBU) The LRA delegation met with President Museveni on November 3 with the African observers to the talks. Museveni began the meeting pointing out that Martin Ojul, James Obita, and Santa Okot were not genuine LRA because Obita and Okot had been members of the ruling party. Museveni also stated that this was not Ojul's first visit to Uganda in 20 years as touted in the press. Museveni told the group that during Ojul's last visit a year ago, he attempted to smuggle out some of Kony's wives and children but was caught in Busia, at the Ugandan-Kenyan border by Ugandan immigration officials. After he finished establishing the LRA delegates' bona fides, Museveni struck a highly conciliatory tone and encouraged them to sign a peace deal. He said that they would all be welcomed back into Uganda. Museveni noted that some of Obita's businesses and assets had been seized since Obita joined the LRA team and said that he (Museveni) had instructed Ugandan government officials to return Obita's assets.

16. (SBU) After the African observers left the room, Museveni reportedly urged the LRA delegates to conclude a peace deal as soon as possible. Museveni also urged them to think through what

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security guarantees were needed for Kony to come out of the bush.

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CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES AGREEMENT EXTENDED
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17. (SBU) The Government and LRA extended the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (CHA) until January 31, 2008. The Congolese observer to the talks, Andre Kapanga, objected to an attempt by the LRA and the GOU to formalize the expansion of the assembly area into a full circle 30 kilometers into Congo. Kapanga told the LRA delegation that the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo did not give permission for the LRA to enter the country. While there was a gentleman's agreement that the LRA could remain within 30 kilometers from the border while the talks proceeded, the GDRC would not, in writing, give the LRA permission to be in the country. Kapanga privately told P/E Chief that the Congolese were concerned that if the assembly area were extended into Congo, then the Ugandan Peoples' Defense Forces (UPDF) might try to justify military actions into the designated assembly areas if the talks failed. The CHA extension would be reviewed on February 1.

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COMMENT
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18. (SBU) Prior to Makasi's arrival, GOU military officials hoped that his escape and warm reception could be used publicly to encourage more LRA defections. However, his arrival coincided with that of the LRA's negotiating team, which could complicate these plans, according to civilian members of the GOU team. They are concerned that the LRA negotiators could claim that the GOU's promotion of defections during the consultations was hostile propaganda and in violation of the CHA. The Government has not yet decided on its way forward.

CHRITTON